

sing. Such artificially stimulated songs were of shorter duration and seemed less inspired. There was no attempt to outsing the tape recorder. Whether this muted behavioural reaction was due to the bird having recognised the song as its own or having realised the mechanical origin of the song remains to be found out.

ENTOMOLOGIST,  
JAWAHARLAL INSTITUTE OF POSTGRADUATE  
MEDICAL EDUCATION AND RESEARCH,  
PONDICHERRY, TAMIL NADU,  
August 9, 1982.

Only the fixed station song (Salim Ali 1960) that elaborately was sung by the male magpie-robin in the mornings between 5.30 and 6.30 were played back in these experiments.

I am grateful to Dr. Rachel Reuben, Deputy Director, Vector Control Research Centre, Pondicherry, for suggestions.

E. NARAYANAN

REFERENCES

ALI, SALIM (1969): Birds of Kerala. Oxford University Press, Bombay.

HENRY, G. M. (1975): A Guide to the Birds of Ceylon. London.

18. MOUSE, A NEST-PARASITE OF BAYA WEAVER BIRD  
(*PLOCEUS PHILIPPINUS* L.)

(With three text-figures)

During my field surveys for indigenous palm species, I came across a few Baya weaver bird (*Ploceus philippinus*) colonies nesting on telegraph wire (Fig. 1). Baya nesting on telegraph wires or on live power lines have been recorded by Ambedkar (1970), Betts (1952), Davis (1971, 1978) and Kirkpatrick (1952). A colony on telegraph line noticed by Devadanam, Ramnad District, Tamilnadu in early July 1981, revealed a curious phenomenon. By May-June, the nests were deserted by the weaver birds since the breeding season was already over by them. But a number of nests were found parasitized by a species of mouse (*Mus* sp.) common in Tamilnadu, for its breeding purpose (Fig. 2). Watching about a dozen semi-adult mice moving around the deserted Baya nests was a spectacular sight.

To satisfy my curiosity, I pulled down some nests with a bamboo pole, when alas! dozens of still younger mice fell down from different nests in the sugarcane field below. However, none of them could walk along the wire even for a short distance. Eventhough I have not seen an adult passing along the wire in order to have ground contact for foraging, I was told by eye witness that the mice move from the nests to the ground and vice-versa only during nights. In the colony which I watched, the mice had to move along the wire to a distance of not less than 10 m to reach the nearest pole for climbing down. Thus, the adult mice seem eminently adapted to climbing posts and walking on wire. Moreover, the adult mice have no need to carry food for the young ones, which would



### MISCELLANEOUS NOTES

have necessitated more hazardous walks over the thin wire.

The African weaver birds whose nests have been parasitized by other animals including birds have been explained in detail by Friedmann (1960). Many ploceine species have

been found to carry out nest-building activities to excessive proportions by building in and out of season. These out-of-season nests, apparently not being used for breeding, are deserted prematurely. Many of these nests offer ideal shelters and breeding place for several species of animals especially birds like Munia (*Lonchura malabarica* L.), members of estrildines, as well as squirrels (Salim Ali 1931, 1977; Ambedkar 1970; Friedmann 1960). Mice are yet another nest-parasite of the Baya weaver bird.

From a study of the nesting sites of the Baya Weaver, Davis (1978) is of the opinion that the bird gives maximum importance to the safety of the nest against predators, wind and rain. Only next in importance, is the availability of nest-weaving material around the host tree. Therefore, attaching nests on telegraph or power lines is presumed to be for greater safety against predators even though it is more vulnerable to wind damage. In order to overcome this disadvantage, the bird ingeniously changes even the structure of the nest by dispensing with long suspension and entrance tubes. Nevertheless, even these telegraph or power lines are not spared by mice and perhaps some snakes. The mice do not harm the birds or the nest contents. But they merely make use of the deserted nest for their breeding purpose. The mouse does not move over the complete nest to enter through the normal opening at the bottom, but it makes a small hole at the top or on a side of the nest through which it enters (Fig. 3). Perhaps the mice devour any dead chick or rotting egg still left in some of the nests. It is possible that in some localities bigger species of rodents could also reach such nests during breeding season and destroy some eggs or young ones.

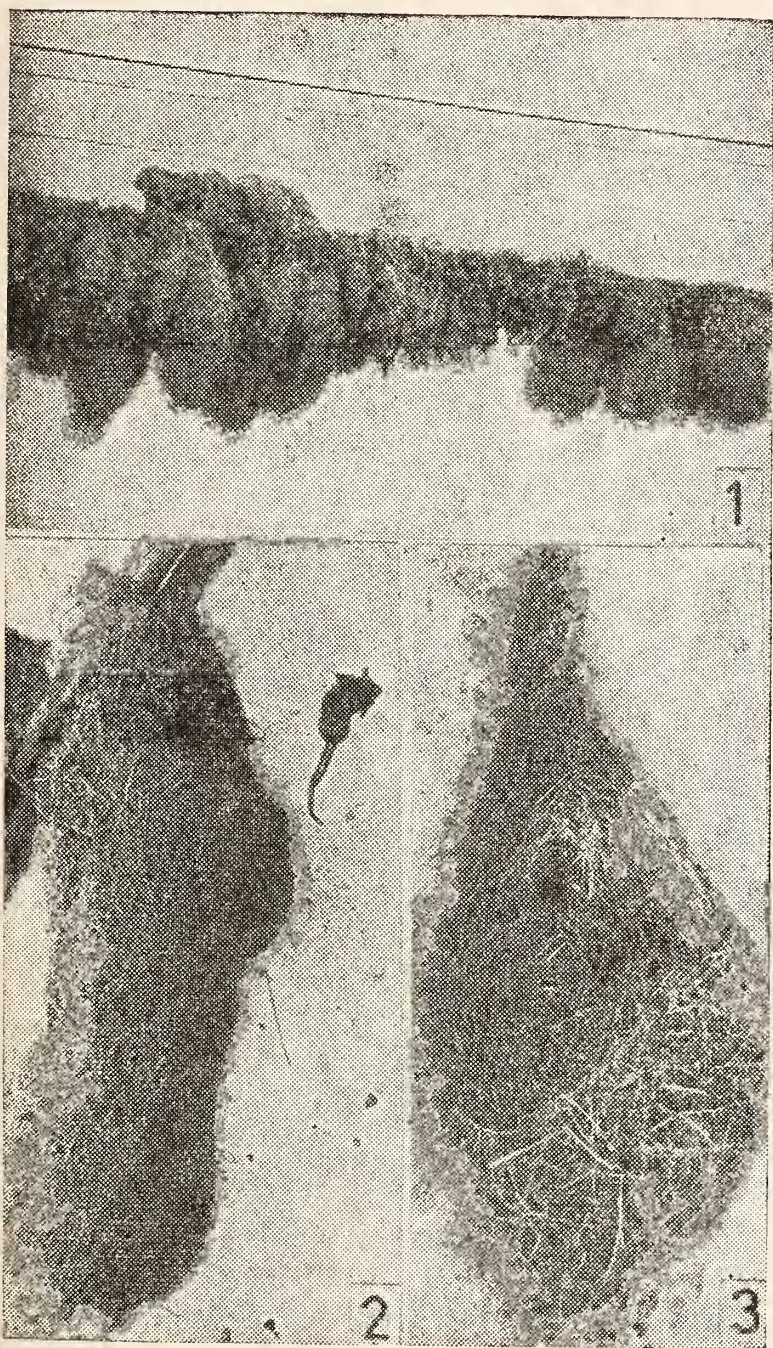


Fig. 1. Weaver birds nests on telegraph wires. Fig. 2. Mouse and Baya Nest. Fig. 3. Entrance hole made by mouse.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I thank Professor T. A. Davis, Director, JBS

JBS HALDANE RESEARCH CENTRE,  
CARMEL NAGAR, NAGERCOIL-2.  
TAMIL NADU, SOUTH INDIA,  
September 5, 1981.

Haldane Research Centre for providing relevant literature and helpful suggestions.

D. REGUPATHY  
T. A. DAVIS

REFERENCES

ALI, SALIM (1931): The nesting habits of the baya (*Ploceus philippinus*). A new interpretation of their domestic relations. *J. Bombay nat. Hist. Soc.* 34: 947-64.

—————(1977): The book of Indian Birds. 10 ed. Bombay Natural History Society, Page 124.

AMBEDKAR, V. C. (1970): Nests of the baya, *Ploceus philippinus* (Linnaeus) on telegraph wires. *J. Bombay nat. Hist. Soc.*, 66: 624.

BETTS, F. N. (1952): Birds nesting on telegraph wires. *J. Bombay nat. Hist. Soc.* 51: 271.

DAVIS, T. A. (1971): Variation in nest-structure

of the common weaverbird *Ploceus philippinus*. *Forma et Functio* 4: 12-21.

————— (1978): Selection of nesting trees and the frequency of nest visits by Baya weaverbirds. *A bundle of feathers* proffered to Sálím Ali for his 75th birth day in 1971. Editor S. D. Ripley page 12-21.

FRIEDMANN, H. (1960): The parasitic weaverbirds. Smithsonian Institution, U. S. National Museum, Bulletin number 223.

KIRKPATRICK, K. M. (1952): Baya (*Ploceus philippinus* Linn.) nests on telegraph wires. *J. Bombay nat. Hist. Soc.* 52: 657.

19. FIRST RECORD OF THE FRESHWATER GREY MULLET,  
*RHINOMUGIL CORSULA* (HAMILTON) FROM MAHARASHTRA

This is the first record of *Rhinomugil corsula* (Ham.) from Maharashtra State. The fishes were found in Bhima and Nira rivers and a few of their tributaries like Ghod and Velvandi. Probably the water depth plays an important role in their limited distribution. The fishes have a peculiar habit of keeping their eyes, head and anterior portion of the body out of water and swim in small shoals. This ability to see out of water makes them hard to catch. Moreover these large river fishes have been seen to survive adverse conditions of temperature and limited food supply.

INTRODUCTION

While surveying the Fauna of Pune district for the Western Regional Station, Zoological Survey of India, we collected *Rhinomugil corsula* (Ham.) from the Bhima river and some of its tributaries.

As a perusal of literature (Menon & Jayaram 1977, Jayaram 1981) confirmed that no

previous record of this fish existed from Maharashtra, it was decided to conduct a thorough survey in Pune district primarily for studying the occurrence and distribution of this fish in Bhima river and its tributaries which form part of the Krishna river system.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Almost all the rivers, streams, etc., passing